

# Winter Weather: Know the Terms

**Winter Storm Watch:** A winter storm is possible in your area. Tune in to your NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or television for more information.

**Winter Storm Warning:** A winter storm is occurring or will soon occur in your area.

**Freezing Rain:** Rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees and power lines.

**Sleet:** Rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes moisture on roads to freeze and become slippery.

**Frost/Freeze Warning:** Below freezing temperatures are expected.

## BEFORE A WINTER STORM

- Add winter supplies like rock salt to melt ice and shovels to your disaster supply kit.
- Prepare for possible isolation in your home by having sufficient heating fuel; regular fuel sources may be cut off.
- Insulate pipes with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.
- Learn how to shut off water valves in case a pipe bursts.
- Have your vehicle serviced to ensure it is prepared for the winter season.
- Place a winter emergency kit in every vehicle that includes: a shovel; windshield scraper and small broom; flashlight; battery-powered radio; extra batteries; water; snack food; matches; extra hats, socks and mittens; first aid kit with pocket knife; necessary medications; blankets; tow chain or rope; road salt and sand; booster cables; emergency flares; fluorescent distress flag.

## DURING A WINTER STORM

- Stay indoors. If you must go outside, dress in layers of loose fitting, lightweight clothing. Wear a hat that covers your ears. Wear mittens and cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs. Wear waterproof, insulated boots to keep your feet warm and dry and to maintain your footing in ice and snow.
- Avoid overexertion when shoveling snow. Overexertion can bring on a heart attack—a major cause of death in the winter. If you must shovel snow, stretch before going outside.
- Keep dry. Change wet clothing frequently to prevent a loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses all of its insulating value and transmits heat rapidly.

- Watch for signs of frostbite such as the loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities such as finger, toes, ear lobes and the tip of your nose.
- Drive only if it is absolutely necessary. If you must drive, travel in the day, don't travel alone and keep others informed of your schedule. Decrease your speed and leave plenty of room to stop the vehicle on icy roads.
- If trapped in your car during a blizzard, pull off of the highway and turn on your hazard lights. Remain in your vehicle where rescuers are most likely to find you. Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. When the engine is running, open a downwind window slightly for ventilation and periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe. This will protect you from possible carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Exercise to maintain body heat, but avoid overexertion. Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.

### AFTER A WINTER STORM

- Listen to your local radio or television station for the latest weather and traffic reports.
- Go to a designated shelter if your home loses power or heat during periods of extreme cold.
- Check on your animals and ensure that their access to food and water is not blocked by snow drifts, ice or other obstacles. Bring them indoors, if possible.
- Be aware of possible carbon monoxide poisoning, electric shock and fire if using alternative sources for electricity, heating or cooking.

### ADDITIONAL WINTER STORM RESOURCES

- [Real-time Road Conditions from SCDOT](#)
- [FEMA](#)
- [Red Cross](#)

*Source: South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD)*

<https://scemd.org/prepare/types-of-disasters/severe-winter-weather/>